***Internet Piracy***

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2-14-12

Period 1

Picture this. You are running your business card company off of the internet. It is your only source of revenue, and the entirety of your life savings was put into creating that business. Then one day, the domain doesn’t work. You try on a different computer, with a different internet connection, and it still doesn’t work. You lose all your money, the income you desperately need, and all because a Hollywood film company thought that you might have had copyrighted content up for download. You may not even live in the United States, but that is what congress is proposing. Now the US’s quest for world dominance is not new, but this goes too far. Piracy on the internet needs to be stopped but not in the way we are proposing.

Congress has been proposing many new bills lately. SOPA, which stands for Stop Online Piracy Act, PIPA, which stands for Protect Intellectual Property Act, and ACTA, which stands for Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement. ACTA has not been voted on yet, nor is it very big. They all propose giving government agencies new tools to block websites from being on the internet because of someone claiming copyright infringement. It would not force companies to shut down their servers, but it would stop anyone from accessing that site. Hollywood sponsors these bills because they say that it will save jobs and be a boost to the economy. But they say nothing about the jobs that they are costing. What about the small business that is shut down because some film studio says they think that the website may have copyrighted content up for download, just maybe. Sure, they might get a couple of sites with pirated content shut down, but what about the sites that don’t? The RIAA (Recording Industry of America) stated “it’s a dangerous and troubling development when the platforms that serve as gate ways to information intentionally skew the facts to incite their users and arm them with misinformation”. And what else would happen if any of these bills passed? Would the EU. Would they create a law that bans all American websites and lets them shut down our websites and small Internet businesses? Jerry Brito wrote, “Imagine if the U.K. created a blacklist of American newspapers that its courts found violated celebrities’ privacy? Or if France blocked American sites it believed contained hate speech”.

Now I know that stopping internet piracy is a priority, and I support efforts to stop it, but this is not the way to do so. Hollywood wants to get all that money they lose to pirates, not supply the economy. The CEO of 21st. Century Fox probably couldn’t care less about the guy who adds green screen effects. More businesses are online anyway, and what would happen if Wikipedia was shut down? What would happen to you if Facebook went down for alleged copyright infringements? It could be a boon to the economy, or it could be a terrible thing that grinds the economy to a halt.

Now I do believe that piracy is a terrible thing that does hurt the economy, but congress has it wrong. Even the President said he was against the bills, and if the President doesn’t support it, maybe it isn’t good for our nation. Instead of shutting down websites because of alleged copyright infringements, Hollywood could get us “internet nerds” to write a program that recognizes copyrights and blocks them from going online without permission. There are better ways to stop this type of crime, and we should explore them instead of jumping to a solution. But next time, before you pirate a song, think about the little guy who added the background singing in that song. Is 99 cents too much to pay for some one else’s well being?